



Board of Nursing

Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Secretary

March 24, 2022

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

**RE: SB 440 – Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland –
Establishment – Letter of Opposition**

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Committee Members:

The Maryland Board of Nursing (the Board) respectfully submits this letter of opposition for Senate Bill (SB) 440 – Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland – Establishment. This bill establishes the Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland to examine certain areas related to health care workforce shortages in the State, including the extent of the workforce shortage, short-term solutions, future health care workforce needs, and the relationship between the Maryland Department of Health and the health occupations boards.

The Board is in favor of establishing a Commission that endorses a centralized and coordinated effort to address the healthcare workforce shortage in the state of Maryland. The original strength of this effort, however, has been greatly diminished by amendments that change the member composition of the Commission. The Board is troubled to find that only four (4) of the twenty-five (25) health occupations boards (HOBs) remain on the Commission. This language not only silences the majority of HOBs' perspectives on the healthcare workforce crisis; it also ignores any potential solutions that may address their specific fields of practice. The Commission should survey, research, and implement strategic and targeted initiatives for each HOB. The member composition will greatly hinder this effort. The Commission may instead be supplied with significant gaps in information, which may result in the adoption of a generalized and superficial approach that inefficiently addresses the root of the problem. The pandemic has not only worsened the workforce shortage; it has also discouraged frontline staff from continuing and returning to practice. It extends far beyond the fields of nursing, pharmacy, medicine, and counseling.

The Board is concerned to find its proposed amendments were not accepted in this bill. The amendment removed language related to the authority the Secretary should have over boards and instead allows the Maryland Department of Health to identify and supply resources if required. The Board believes this amendment furthers efforts to address the workforce shortage by facilitating a partnership between MDH and the HOBs.

On page 4. Line 12. Remove and Instead Add:

(i) [WHAT AUTHORITY THE SECRETARY SHOULD HAVE OVER THE BOARDS] ANY BARRIERS THAT THE HEALTH OCCUPATION BOARDS FACE AND IDENTIFY ANY RESOURCES REQUIRED TO ASSIST THEM; AND

The Board seeks additional information on how the Commission will create and submit the interim and final reports to the General Assembly. The bill remains silent on how recommendations will be discussed and published, and whether a majority vote will be the determining factor. This could potentially leave HOBs in the minority, which will be a disservice to the healthcare field.

For the reasons discussed above, the Board of Nursing respectfully submits this letter of opposition for SB 440.

I hope this information is useful. For more information, please contact Iman Farid, Health Policy Analyst, at (410) 585 – 1536 (iman.farid@maryland.gov) or Rhonda Scott, Deputy Director, at (410) 585 – 1953 (rhonda.scott2@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Hicks', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Gary N. Hicks
Board President

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.